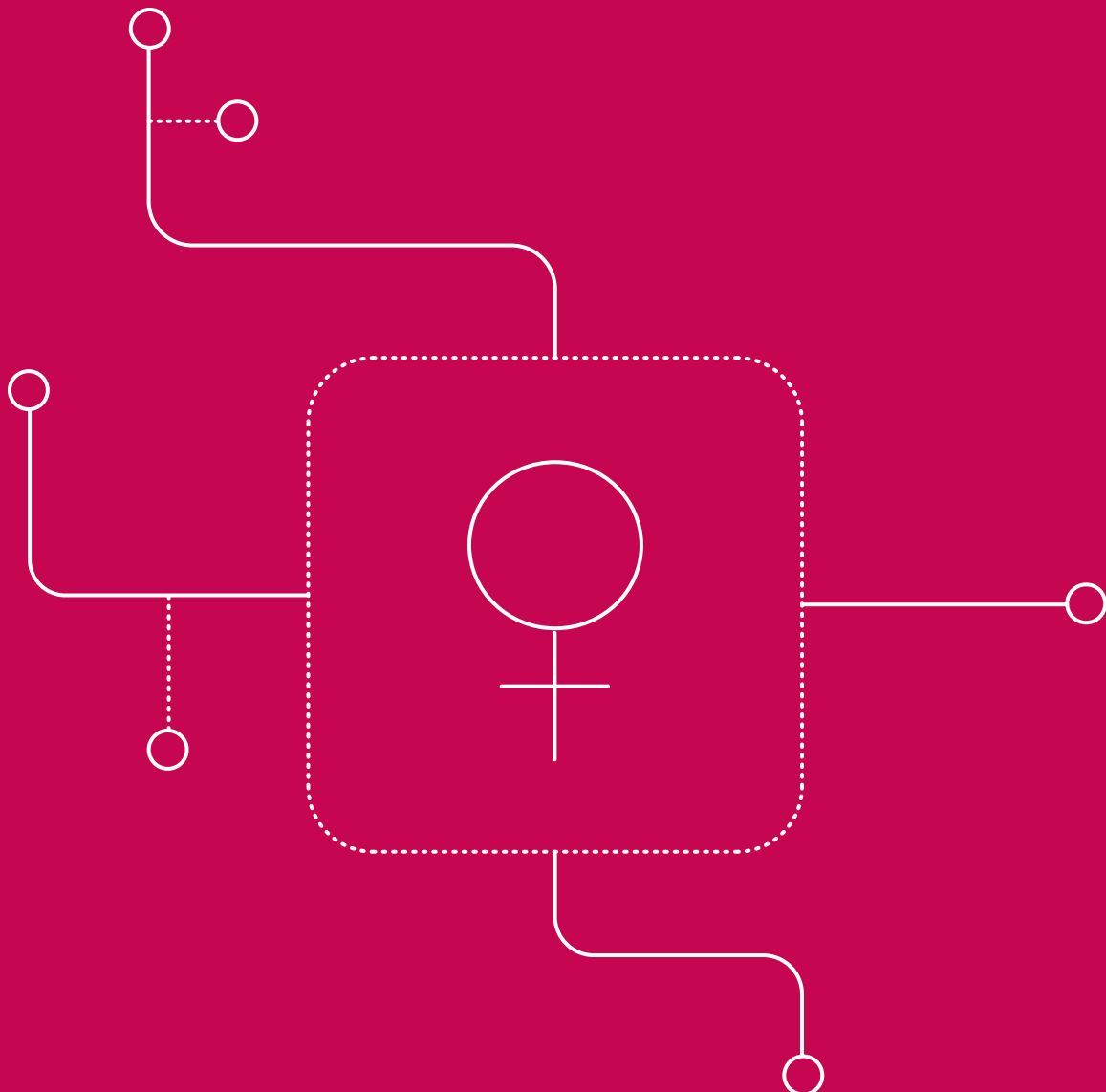


Program Structures

While the booklets in this section outlined practices that can help to build capacity to work with women, there are also program structures that can increase women’s use of harm reduction programs. This section reviews ideas that are specific to program structures.

- 1 Women-Specific Programs
- 2 Supply Distribution
- 3 Service Models and Locations



1 WOMEN SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

Creating programs where women learn from each other can help to foster gender specific harm reduction practices.

Examples include:



Women's harm reduction groups (e.g., kit-making groups, gardening groups, shared meals, or discussion groups)



Women-only spaces, drop-in programs or program times (e.g., a women's-only hour each day, or a day of the week focused on women, or a women's-only space)



Women's meetings (e.g., an advisory committee, meetings about important local issues women are experiencing, or meetings to collaboratively work toward an identified and needed change in the community)

"I wish harm reduction programs could teach women how to cook up their own dope, and how to inject by themselves, that kinda thing. I know how, but like a lot of girls I know don't and they have to ask for help. If there's like a women's only program - women can help teach each other this kind of stuff."

Activities

It can be helpful to have groups, meetings, or spaces that are based on activities outside of drug use. Activities such as gardening, cooking, Indigenous medicine teachings, or spaces to socialize can help to foster positive relationships and wellness.

Tensions

Initiating women specific programming can create tensions, depending on the community or population. In some cases, it may create a sense that some groups are getting "special" privileges. Inviting the community to understand the background and help plan programs, and having clear and transparent communication and reasoning about why it is important, can help to foster community understanding.

2 SUPPLY DISTRIBUTION

Almost all of the women participating in this project reported picking up supplies for other women, and 80% reported having other people do so for them.

Women pick up multiple supplies to:



Give them to others who may not go to harm reduction programs



Reduce the number of times they have to visit the program. In many cases, women wanted to visit programs less frequently due to concerns related to confidentiality, relationship dynamics, difficulties in transportation, and other barriers that exist

Tips

Some tips that may help to address these experiences:

- Encourage staff to have supplies in their office or desk. This can be helpful if women don't feel comfortable going into the harm reduction program space.
- Partner with other organizations (e.g., shelters, drop-ins, meal programs, food banks) to distribute harm reduction supplies where women already go.
- Encourage those who distribute harm reduction supplies to invite women to take supplies for friends. This creates an opportunity for women to take supplies without disclosing their own drug use while also encouraging them to provide supplies to friends who use drugs.

"I pick up supplies for other women. It's harder for women to come out as drug users. We care what people think. We have more to lose."



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information about helpful harm reduction supplies, see the **Women's Harm Reduction Tools & Tips** guide, which is part of this toolkit.

 whai.ca/resources

3 SERVICE MODELS AND LOCATIONS

A variety of service delivery models are helpful to improve women's access to harm reduction programs. Amongst women who participated in this project:

31%

picked up harm reduction supplies at a **fixed site**

53%

picked up supplies from a drop in program or shelter that works from a harm reduction perspective

48%

picked up supplies from a street outreach or **mobile program**

42%

picked up supplies at **satellite sites**

SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS



Fixed site

A community-based harm reduction distribution program located in a community agency, Public Health Unit, AIDS Service Organization, or community health centre



Mobile Program

A harm reduction distribution program that moves around the community by foot, bicycle, or vehicle, delivering harm reduction supplies



Satellite Program

A program located in someone's home or at a partnered community agency

While the development of different service delivery models can be costly, there are also some opportunities for **cost savings**. Building partnerships with other organizations, fostering the leadership of women who use drugs, encouraging people to take supplies to others in the community, and utilizing bicycles and walking distribution can help to extend the reach and effectiveness of programs while also being cost effective.

LOCATION

In addition to having multiple models of service delivery, it is helpful to distribute harm reduction supplies in locations that are:



Familiar

spaces where women already go



Accessible

by foot or public transit



Discreet

so women can pick up supplies without being seen by others